



Forest Practices Program

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Problem Definition

Forestlands account for a large portion of land in the Puget Sound basin, particularly in the upper watersheds. Their presence has many positive effects on the Puget Sound and its surrounding areas. Forests assist in filtering and absorbing stormwater, shade streams and rivers that are home to anadromous fish, and provide a source of large woody debris in fish-bearing streams. They also provide habitat for important populations of birds, amphibians and mammals, and provide important habitat corridors. How we conduct forest practices affects Puget Sound's water quality and habitat.

As forestlands are developed, water quality can be affected. Runoff, sedimentation and riverbed scouring increase—which can have potentially devastating effects on fish habitat.

Timber harvesting and road construction contribute large amounts of sediment to streams and rivers if precautions are not taken. Sedimentation contributes significantly to the loss of fish habitat. Logging roads built prior to road requirements under the Forest Practices Act and since abandoned (or orphaned) are of particular concern. Since sedimentation impacts salmon and trout habitat, these concerns are more pressing since the 1999 listing of

some species of salmon, steelhead and bull trout under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Many forest conversions happen in areas that have already been developed, usually in the lower portions of watersheds, as more housing tracts and malls are built. To preserve these important habitat lands, small forestland owners in the Puget Sound basin must receive assistance and support to both keep their lands in forest production and to use best management practices in doing so.

Institutional Framework

Forest practices are regulated by Washington's Forest Practices Act, RCW 76.09, administered by the Department of Natural Resources. The Forest Practices Rules contain additional requirements for wetlands and streams, clearcut size and timing, and a watershed analysis process. These rules are being updated in response to Endangered Species Act listings, Clean Water Act 303 (d) listings and the 1999 *Forests and Fish Report*. The proposed rules include new standards intended to protect salmon. These include provisions for riparian buffers, road building and maintenance, road abandonment and ground-based logging.

What does "shall" mean?

The Action Team has determined that the actions in this plan are needed to protect and restore Puget Sound. Consistent with the importance of these actions, this plan says that appropriate implementers "shall" perform the actions. However, implementation of many of these actions is a long-term process. The Action Team's work plans will identify the actions that need to be taken each biennium to implement this management plan. Implementation of actions in the work plans is subject to the availability of funds and public input into the decision-making processes of implementing entities. When an action is included in a biennial work plan, the Action Team expects that it will be implemented in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Puget Sound management plan, in accordance with Chapter 90.71 RCW.

One of the most important aspects of forest practices management in Washington is the 1986 Timber/Fish/Wildlife (TFW) Agreement. Under this agreement, tribal governments, environmental organizations, state and federal agencies, counties and timber companies negotiated forest practice agreements. The TFW is a collaborative, consensus process involving various interest groups. The TFW interest groups have negotiated rule proposals for such factors as water quality, cumulative effects, spotted owls and aquatic habitat.

The Forest Practices Program endorses the TFW approach for managing our forests, sets forth a collaborative process between the state Department of Natural Resources and local governments for administering forestland conversions, and seeks to protect long-term timber production in areas zoned for mixed use.

Program Goal

To restore and protect water quality and fish habitat from effects connected with improper forest practices on federal, state and private lands and to restore water bodies and fish habitat already degraded by improper forest practices.

Program Strategy

The strategy for achieving this goal is to:

- a. Continue using the TFW Agreement approach for reaching consensus on forestry management issues;
- b. Implement the new forest practices rules; and
- c. Develop and implement local programs to address the effects of private forestland conversions and small forestry operations.

FP-1. Timber/Fish/Wildlife Agreement

The Action Team endorses the Timber/Fish/Wildlife (TFW) Agreement and revisions to the Forest Practices Act and Regulations. The Action Team will support statutory and regulatory actions, including any federal and state funding proposals, necessary to implement the TFW Agreement. The Action Team also supports the watershed analysis requirements under the revised Forest Practices Rules and encourages the Department of Natural Resources to expedite the analysis schedule.

The Action Team may review and comment on major milestones and documents of the TFW Agreement as they relate to Puget Sound, both providing the Forest Practices Board with comments on regulatory and policy initiatives of the TFW Agreement and participating in the annual evaluation process of the agreement.

FP-2. Private Forestland Conversions

Any local government wishing to manage forest practice activities shall develop a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with Natural Resources. This MOA should clearly delineate and coordinate each agency's respective authorities and responsibilities in the processing, administration and enforcement of forest practice activities within the local government's jurisdiction, especially as they relate to the clearing of land for development purposes.

In conjunction with an MOA, a local government shall make full use of the existing regulatory tools for managing and regulating forest practices. This would include: adopting clearing and grading ordinances; imposing six-year development moratoriums on lands harvested without a declaration of intent to convert (RCW 76.09.060); utilizing Conversion Option Harvest Plans (WAC 222-20-050); acting as the lead agency, as appropriate, for the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) on Class IV general forest practices; and working with Natural Resources in designating areas likely to convert.

The Action Team encourages local governments; the departments of Natural Resources, Ecology, Fish and Wildlife; the Office of Community Development (OCD); tribal governments; forestland owners; and environmental interests to work in cooperation through the TFW Conversion Committee to develop recommendations to the legislature and appropriate rule-making authorities for improving the regulatory framework surrounding this issue. This would include an examination of the Forest Practices Act, SEPA and Growth Management Act to identify areas of conflict and unnecessary duplication.

FP-3. Long-Term Forest Management in Mixed-Use Areas

Washington State University (WSU) Cooperative Extension, in cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources, local governments, the departments of Ecology, Fish and Wildlife, and OCD, con-

servation districts and tribal governments, shall develop a program to encourage and promote the use of best management practices, consistent with Washington's Water Quality Management Plan to Control Nonpoint Pollution, by small forestland owners in mixed-use areas.

The program shall include technical assistance and education programs, as well as information on financial assistance, for small landowners who intend to keep their lands in long-term timber production.

